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AUTHOR Orr, Fred
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ABSTRACT

What shyness is and how it affects teenagers, the various ways in which shyness can be manifest in teenagers, and possible causes of shyness, as well as the role of parents and their relationships with shy young people are discussed in this expanded seminar paper. Some situations in which an adolescent might be shy are identified and guidelines indicating ways parents can help their adolescent children are offered. In addition, a training manual for conducting a program of treatment sessions aimed at helping adolescents overcome shyness in opposite-sex social interactions is included in the document. The seven sessions of the program consist mainly of exercises, discussion, and homework. (A total of 16 hours of training is outlined in the manual.) (Author/RH)

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Number 16

Unit for Child Studies

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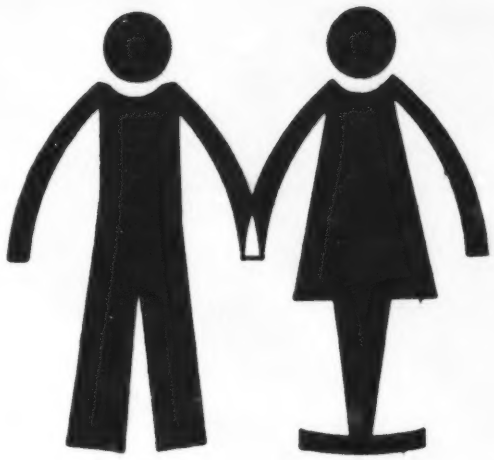

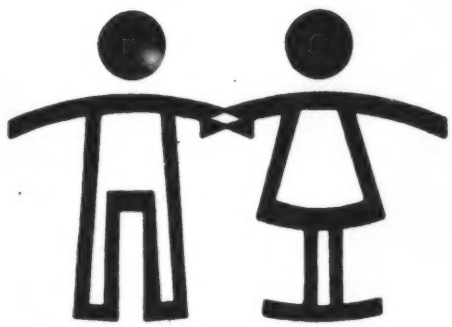

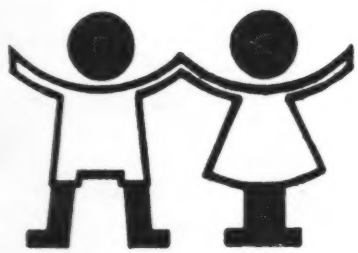

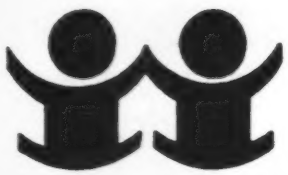

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ADOLESCENT SHYNESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

DR FRED ORR

ADOLESCENT SHYNESS AND SELF-ESTEEEM

DR FRED ORR

Counselling Unit
University of New South Wales

INTRODUCTION

I can remember very well the afternoon of my second dancing lesson when I was 13 years old. My parents had sent me along to the classes to learn how to relate better to my peers and hopefully, learn to dance as well. We were instructed to wear white gloves (I cannot understand why) and to have our shoes clean and shined. The first lesson antagonized me sufficiently to arouse a certain amount of belligerent stubbornness. The behavioural outcome of these feelings was a black-gloved protest - I simply placed both white-gloved palms against the city bus as it drew away from the bus stop. As you can imagine, I was summarily dismissed from the class as soon as I extended my hand to the dancing teacher.

In retrospect, the major features of this incident would typify an average adolescent - if such a person exists (adolescents generally seem to be people who exhibit extremes such as the high-ups or low-downs). Shyness and social reticence are very common features of adolescence, as is a tendency to avoid and procrastinate - with one's homework, domestic chores, etc. The belligerence and stubbornness during adolescence would be the proverbial thorn in the sides of many a parent of an adolescent.

Having remarked about several characteristics of adolescents and their behaviour with peers and others, perhaps it would be appropriate to specify what this paper primarily addresses. The paper will focus upon shyness in adolescence, and special note will be given to the role of self-esteem. Initially, I will describe what shyness is and how it affects teenagers (and others as well). I will talk about the various ways in which shyness can be manifest in teenagers and briefly discuss some thoughts about the causes of shyness. Having dealt with those issues, I will turn to the roles of parents and their relations with shy young people. Probably, the most important part of the paper will be: What can you do to assist a shy adolescent?

Before going any further, it is important to say that this relatively short paper will not be able to do justice to the topic of shyness in adolescence - it is far too complex an issue and would require much more definitive and detailed treatment than can be given here. If you are shy, or you have a relative or close friend who is shy, talk to the person (or talk to yourself, if shy) and plan to take some definite action. The first step might be to read this paper as a guide to what can be done afterwards.

As suggested above, shyness is a very complex condition. When the condition of shyness is mentioned, you might well entertain an image of a frilly-dressed young lady standing against the gymnasium wall at the school dance with a fairly distraught expression on her face. She might be looking eagerly around for possible dancing partners, but then, she could just as well have her eyes firmly fixed on her patent leather dancing shoes and be inwardly wishing, above all else, that she were at home - or any place other than at the school dance.

While the above description is a commonly held view of a shy adolescent (it is prudent to say here that the shy person could just as easily be a young man with small variations in the behavioural code), shyness can also be manifest as very aggressive, extroverted, or even life-of-the-party type behaviour. It might seem surprising that many aggressive or apparently extroverted and sociable people can experience difficulty forming close intimate relationships. The result can be the same no matter whether the presenting picture is that of a wallflower, an extrovert or any of numerous other possible prototypes - *loneliness*. Suffice it to say that a lonely person can lurk behind many different masks - you see the happy face, the sad face, the angry or the bland face, and beneath it can be a shy, lonely person.

Having described some of the possible presenting pictures, what are the consequences of being a shy adolescent? Several consequences of shyness can be listed:

- Difficulty in becoming involved in games and activities (sitting on the sidelines);
- Inactivity in the classroom;
- Difficulty in presenting one's strengths and interests to others;
- Excessive attention being given to inward thinking - preoccupation with the self;
- Difficulty in thinking clearly and responding appropriately to others;
- Frequent bouts with anxiety, especially about social matters, leading to loneliness;

The above list of possible consequences suggests that shyness is multi-faceted. Indeed it is. Definitions of shyness can be traced as far back as about 1000 AD when the term was used in an Anglo Saxon poem. The meaning then was "easily frightened". To be shy was considered to be "difficult to approach, owing to timidity, caution or distrust". Other definitions include: "cautiously averse in encountering or having to do with some specified person or thing"; "wary in speech or action, shrinking from self-assertion". One definition goes to the extreme of suggesting that the shy person is "of questionable character, disreputable, 'shady'".

How many shy people are there about us? Dr Philip Zimbardo, a leading social psychologist at Stanford University, recently conducted a multi-cultural survey assessing the prevalence of shyness. He found that more than 80 percent of those questioned reported that they were shy at some point in their lives. In the Zimbardo study, about one quarter of the respondents said they were chronically shy - that is, they have been shy for the bulk of their lives.

Even though cultures vary one from the other, the findings of the Zimbardo study are strikingly similar to the results of a study conducted locally in Australia in 1974. As the investigator in the local study, I was interested to see if shyness was sufficiently prevalent to merit a full and thorough treatment study. The results showed that about 21 per cent of the survey respondents reported high to extreme anxiety and feelings of inadequacy at the prospect of meeting an opposite-sex peer who was unknown to them. A finding of one in five persons experiencing a marked shyness response justified further research into the nature and modification of shyness.

The data from the local study were gathered from local teenagers, mostly first year university students. The Zimbardo study included younger age samples as well as tertiary students. The data from that study show that 42 percent of fourth, fifth and sixth class primary students reported being shy, with the boys being equally likely of being shy as the girls. When first and second form high school students were assessed, the average level of shyness was found to have increased to 54 percent with the girls reporting more shyness

than the boys.

It is interesting to speculate about this sex difference in shyness. Zimbardo suggests that girls in high school may experience a greater need to be popular and to be considered physically attractive by the opposite-sex. To illustrate this need, Zimbardo presents a letter to Ann Landers, a syndicated personal problem newspaper columnist:

> "Dear Ann Landers, I hope you won't throw my letter away just because it's from a mixed-up teenager. I really feel yucky and need help. My main problem is I don't like my personality - I try to be overly friendly to cover up my shyness and then I act loud. I'm jealous of certain girls and wish I was like them but when I try to be, it doesn't come off.
>
> Some days I feel popular just because a certain guy says hello or smiles at me. The next day I'm miserable because a group of girls are huddled in a corner and I think they are laughing at me behind my back. My grades are O.K. but they could be better. Mom says I'm disorganized. She yells because I pay so much attention to my hair instead of my homework. This is my fourth letter to you. I've thrown all the others away, but this one is going into the mail no matter what. Signed, Different."

While the above letter typifies some adolescent female concerns, shyness also affects males. As for incidence, there appears to be no significant difference between the sexes in the prevalence of shyness. Both the local and the Zimbardo studies found that university men reported only a slightly higher incidence of shyness than similar age women. Perhaps this could be explained by the societal expectation of the male as the social initiator, a sex role stereotype which is slowly being broken down.

Are people who have been shy in the past necessarily relegated to a life of shyness? No, shyness can be modified, dismissed or outgrown. Zimbardo's research data show that 40 percent of persons reported that they had been shy, but were no longer.

Before going any further, it is important to say that shyness is not a condition which necessarily demands change. In fact, shyness can be an alluring quality in a person and some shy people are quite happy as they are. The presenting picture of the shy individual could be described just as easily as "sensitive", "unassuming", "retiring". Shyness is only a problem if the shy individual feels that he/she has no option but to be lonely. If social loneliness and academic or career limitations are experienced as a result of shyness and these consequences disturb the shy individual, then the responsibility falls upon the individual to do something about it.

WHAT CAUSES SHYNESS?

Just as there are many definitions of shyness, there are many and varied concepts about what causes people to be shy. Some theorists maintain that shyness is inherited, much like blood type, body proportions or intelligence. Another group believes that shy people somehow missed out on learning vital interpersonal communication skills. Still another school of thought is centred around the role of unconscious conflicts. That is, shy people are shy because of internal turmoil and unresolved problems. A final theory maintains that shy people are shy because that is how they see themselves and, as well, that is how they allow others to label them. In no way could these theories exhaust the possible causes of shyness. As stated before, it is a most complex condition and it is perfectly likely that the shyness of any one person could be explained

from numerous theoretical stands.

As a behaviourist, I believe that behaviour, be it appropriate or inappropriate, is learned and can be unlearned. While not ignoring other possible factors which might be causative explanations for a person's shyness, I generally tend to look closely at early personal and family experiences to see what factors might have influenced the shy person. Over the years, I have heard many shy persons remark that they were never trusted as a child. For example, when standing on a chair at the counter in the kitchen, the child might have been severely scolded by his mother for reaching out to p ck up a sharp knife to help Mum. Of course, the mother was concerned about the possibility of the child incurring an injury, but the same reprimand could have been handled more constructively by the mother pleasantly agreeing to the child's helping gesture, but giving the child a safe bread and butter knife. That way, the child would be perfectly safe helping and could also feel more competent in learning a new skill.

Some people I have talked with over the past years report being shy following an acutely embarrassing incident. I can still experience vestiges of the acute embarrassment experienced on my first trip with a teenage group to New York City.

Following a day of sightseeing, we went to an Italian restaurant where I ordered a chicken and spaghetti meal. As I was chatting with a friend at my side, I was unaware that my plate full of chicken, spaghetti and peas was slowly being worked closer and closer to the edge of the table. The inevitable happened! With a firm downward stroke of my knife, the entire contents of the plate was catapulted sky-wards, showering me, and those around me, with chicken, spaghetti and peas. It was the sort of situation which you read about in books or see in situation comedies. It never happens to anyone you know and certainly not to yourself - except occasionally.

The outcome of that disastrous predicament was salvaged by an astute waiter who speedily helped clean up the mess and bring out another meal. To this day I am cautious about the position of my plate relative to the table edge, especially so when eating spaghetti!

While a thorough history might reveal embarrassing incidents in the past of some shy individuals, most persons seeking help at the Shyness Clinic will report feeling shy all of their lives. Additionally, many will report being raised in a home where one or both parents were shy and there was either a limited or non-existent social life at home. With such a history, it is likely that these individuals have experienced learning deficits. That is, they have missed the valuable experiences of seeing effective social relations being modeled at home and they have lacked the opportunity of putting to rest unrealistic doubts and fears about their own ability to relate to others.

With the shy person who has missed these valuable learning experiences, a learning programme can be most helpful. They are able to learn and practice the basic skills of effective communication and then extend these skills into their day-to-day lives. A booklet describing the sessional programme of a previous shyness programme has been appended to the paper.

PARENTS AND SHY CHILDREN

It is commonly said that shyness begins at home. With such an open invitation to explaining behaviour, parents of shy children might immediately begin soul-searching for the causative factor of their children's shyness. However,

they will probably have considerable difficulty finding a quick and easy explanation. Just as shyness was described as a complex phenomenon, the causative roots are equally involved. Past and present research suggests four factors which have been found to be associated with shyness: the self-image of the shy child; the child's birth order; how well parents and children predict each other's shyness; and the extent to which shy parents have shy children.

Research findings on the self-image of the shy child do not present a very positive picture. Shy boys were found to describe themselves as too tall, too fat, too weak, and less attractive than their not shy classmates. Shy girls were found to describe themselves as thin, unattractive and less intelligent than their peers. The most important aspect for shy boys and girls is that they see themselves as being "less popular" than their peers. Are these feelings justified? Research studies show that shy youngsters are likely to be their own worst enemies. That is, they tend to see predominantly their own weaknesses and rarely give themselves credit for their strengths.

Are shy youngsters less intelligent or less capable? No. The evidence is quite conclusive that shy children are not less intelligent than their not shy classmates. A differentiating characteristic between the two groups can be found, however, in their willingness to speak in class. The shy children are prone to believe they are quiet in class because they are less intelligent than their peers. In fact, it is more likely that the shy children are simply anxious about speaking out in the classroom situation.

Birth order has been the focus of much interest for decades. Researchers have explored the association of birth order with numerous states and conditions. For example, it is interesting to note that twenty of the first twenty-three American astronauts were first born or only children in their families. Just as leadership, or more specifically "astronautship", seems to be linked to birth order, so is shyness. Previous investigations have shown that significantly more pre-adolescent first borns are shy while a significantly greater percentage of later borns are not shy. However, by late teens, shyness is not any more likely to occur in first borns as opposed to later borns.

What is the explanation for the birth order effect? One possible reason is that parents tend to be more anxious and concerned about their first born children. After all, parenthood for the first time is an experiment and the phases of childhood, especially in the early years, are filled with uncertainty. Another reason for the birth order differences is that later-born children often get a very early introduction to important interpersonal communication skills such as negotiation, persuasion and compromise. Research evidence supports the contention that later born children tend to be more popular as measured by playmate choice. Furthermore, teachers' ratings show that early borns are less effective in their use of communication skills in the classroom and on the playground.

A third factor of interest is the extent of sensitivity to shyness between parents and children. It is interesting to note that most children are totally oblivious to shyness in their parents, but they will readily specify which of their teachers they believe to be shy. Of the two parents, mothers tend to be the more accurate in specifying when a shy child is shy and when a not shy child is not. Fathers, on the other hand, were found to be relatively insensitive to shyness in their children.

The fourth factor is especially interesting - that is, what effect does a shy parent have upon the children in the family. The evidence is quite conclusive on this point. Research findings show that of children of shy fathers, three quarters will also be shy. A similar pattern is apparent with mothers who are shy - about 62 percent of their children will be shy as well. Thus, growing up in a household with one or both parents being shy is strongly associated with the possibility of the children being shy (Zimbardo, 1977).

Why does this predisposition exist? One possible explanation can be found in what we call family roles. Looking at your own family, you can probably identify the various members in certain ways. Suzy is the confident and outgoing one and Kim is quiet, reserved and sensitive. Tom, on the other hand, can be a bully with his sisters, but shy with others. Labels such as "bully" and "shy" tend to influence how we behave with these children and how they, in turn, respond to us.

The roles and labels which we assign to people tend to generate expectations in how these persons "should" behave. Philip Zimbardo quotes the following "Dear Abby" letter which illustrates the role expectation basis for interpersonal behaviour as well as the complexities of analyzing behaviour in social situations.

"Dear Abby: My husband is almost perfect. We've been married for three years and get along fine, but there is one problem. When we are with people Norton is very quiet. I am forever making excuses for him, like, "Oh, Norton is tired tonight", or "Norton isn't feeling very well".

When he and I are alone together he is fine, but when we're in company, he clams up. People keep asking me if he's mad.

Have you any suggestions for him? Or for me?"

Norton's Wife

"Dear Wife: Tell Norton that silence is sometimes mistaken for unfriendliness, so please try to be more sociable. But don't nag him about it. He's probably shy, and too much pushing on your part will make him even more self-conscious."

Zimbardo comments that some of the difficulty manifested by Norton might lie in his wife's quarter. He notes:

"- Maybe Norton is as quiet when alone with his wife as he is with company. He doesn't change in the two situations, only her expectations do.

- Maybe it is Ms Norton who changes when she is in company - talks too much or acts in ways that embarrass her husband. That's why he clams up.

- Maybe Norton does not like her friends and is making a sacrifice just to accompany her, and he's too much of a gentleman to tell her.

- Maybe the company Ms Norton keeps all talk a lot or talk about topics that Norton has no interest or expertise in. His silence then may be purposely chosen to save face (or not embarrass his social-climbing wife).

- Maybe Norton's silence conceals his anger at the typically bigotted conversation, or his moral outrage at the grossness of the table talk."

The same pressures that Norton's wife might have been placing upon Norton can be applied to children. Parents often subject their children to similar

social pressure and then wonder why they behave in the way they do. Being sensitive to the expectations and roles we place upon our children can help us to understand more effectively their behaviour.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE SHY ADOLESCENT

To a certain extent, adolescence will be characterized by some anxiety and some holding back because of the activities, pressures and challenges which befall the adolescent at home, at school and with their peers. As noted earlier, parents for the first time often experience uncertainty in their parenting skills. The same can be expected in the adolescent facing the new experience of adolescence.

Some of the wider range of possible situations in which the adolescent might manifest shyness are:

- At school: Starting high school will generally present the adolescent with greater expectations academically and socially - more homework and larger classes.

  Thus, the shy adolescent might be ill at ease standing in the classroom, speaking in classroom discussions, asking the teacher for assistance, or becoming involved in extra-curricular activities.

- At home: Puberty can be associated with what seems like unrealistically long periods of meditative contemplation when the adolescent secludes him or herself in the bedroom or bathroom.

  From a family point of view, the problem is acute when these long periods of self contemplation occur in the bathroom between 8 and 9 o'clock when everyone else wishes to use the same facilities. Of course, what is likely occurring is a careful application of the latest pimple cream to hide the adolescent skin blemishes.

  Another home situation which can occur frequently is conflict between parent/s and adolescent over peer group affiliations, use of car, time for returning home on nights out, to name but a few possible conflict topics.

- With peers: Adolescents will generally strive to blend into the prevailing group norms and value systems. For example, when a group of adolescents get together, it is striking how similar they look. Hair styles, clothing, and accessories tend to be predictably similar. The shy adolescent will generally not want to be conspicuously different from the peer group but may make a concerted effort to be different from the parents.

The above examples give just a sketch of the spectrum of possible presenting problems for the shy adolescent. If some of these situations are pertinent to your own situation as a parent of a shy adolescent, what then can you do to help?

Probably, the first thing to realize, is that the adolescent might not welcome your helpful gestures. Adolescence is a transition period between childhood dependence and adult independence. Thus, the adolescent might well respond to your caring concern by rejecting your offer of help. A third party might be helpful here - a counsellor, a trusted friend, someone who is outside the emotional bonding between parent and child.

Assuming that your offer of help to your shy adolescent is accepted, then what can be done? Generally speaking, there are three primary aspects which can characterize shyness - anxiety in social settings, inadequate social skills and low self-esteem. As the present paper is addressed primarily to self-esteem, I will focus my remaining comments upon that aspect. However, if your adolescent is persistently and obviously anxious in social settings or totally avoiding them and/or generally inadequate in social skills, you should consider consulting a professional who is experienced in adolescent work to seek advice.

Focusing upon low self-esteem, let me say that more than any other aspect of shyness, a healthy and positive self-esteem is most critical. The other problems in the shyness syndrome can be more easily resolved if the self-esteem factor is improved.

What is at the base of a healthy and positive self-esteem? Generally speaking, the two aspects which I find most critical are a feeling of being loved and a feeling of personal competency.

It is surprising how infrequently parents tell their children "I love you". This becomes more the case as children become adolescents and then ultimately adults. Because the words "I love you" have such a significant and emotional impact upon people, parents might find difficulty in saying these words to their teenagers. Given this possible hurdle, the same message can also be communicated by non-verbal means - as a kiss, a warm cuddle, an arm around the shoulders, holding hands, a smile or just the predictable and positive presence of the parents.

I recently saw an adolescent lass who was having a serious problem with her weight. An associated problem was a very low level of self-esteem. While there were several other contributing aspects to the problem, I made two principle recommendations. One, I suggested that the parents give the lass full responsibility for her weight control. For one month, the parents were not to comment upon their daughter's weight. If they saw her nibbling on snacks, they were to bite their tongues and avoid making any comment.

The second recommendation was to give their daughter as much love as possible. How? They were asked to make appropriate physical contact whenever they could. I suggested that the father place his hand on his daughter's shoulder when he helped her with a homework problem. Mum should make appropriate contact as well. It should come as no surprise that the reason why physical contact is such a sensitive issue in our society is primarily because it is so powerful. In addition to the non-verbal messages of love and genuine affection for their daughter, they were to tell her they loved her. This can be done when saying goodnight, a very meaningful way to end a day. The outcome of the family approach to the weight problem was a very significant loss in the daughter's weight and a much closer and affectionate family. Not surprisingly, the daughter's self-esteem blossomed as well.

While communicating to your children that you, as a parent, love them, it is equally important that your children develop a love for themselves. That might sound self-centred, but it is very critical. The often-quoted adage, "You cannot love others until you learn to love yourself" is quite true. How can a feeling of self-love, or perhaps more aptly put, self-esteem, be developed?

One way of developing a positive self-esteem is to work towards a mastery of one's potentials and skills - to find one's niche in life. You can probably recall a period in your life when you were looking for your identity, your niche. Chances are that one noteworthy period of identity searching was during the adolescent years. It can be most unsettling to be wandering aimlessly, looking for an identity.

I can vividly recall taking many midnight walks at 17 years old. I was in my first year at university and I was uncertain about where I was going, and indeed, what I was doing there at university. I was totally disorganized and certainly not thriving. It took a full year of torment and introspection before I was able to get established in my studies - and to like myself as a student. One of the essential skills I learned in that difficult year was how to get on with my life, both in the short and long term.

I started mapping out my long term goals, my career objectives, my university course, my semester projects and assignments. Additionally, I planned how to attack the tasks in my daily life. By noting all of the tasks I hoped to get done each day and by rating them from high to low priority, I found I was able to get more done each day and to feel better and better about myself. As the days and weeks passed, I was quite proud of my accomplishments.

To be certain, a healthy self-esteem is not simply a function of receiving loving comments and gestures from one's family and getting a lot of tasks done each day. It is far more complex. But it is fair to say that these two aspects can be good starting points.

For the more seriously shy and reticent adolescent, additional approaches might well be necessary. Group programmes can be very helpful. One of the unique features of such programmes is that they provide the opportunity for positive feedback to be given to the individual by members of the peer group. Communication skills training, relaxation training, and self-esteem enhancing exercises can be worked on so that the shy individual can be more skilled, more relaxed and more confident in daily social meetings.

To end a short paper on a very complex topic, I would hope that every provision could be made for shy people to break loose from their imprisoning inhibitions. While the pathway might appear to be very long, and hampered by seemingly insurmountable hurdles, the only real way to solve the problem is to start trying. A comforting thought along the way is that even the most successful people fail in two thirds of their ventures. The reason they succeed is that they keep trying. It is important for the shy individual to keep trying as well. Once you start down the pathway and you have built up some momentum, the hurdles do not seem quite so high. The hurdles are far less ominous after several have been conquered.

I think a fitting conclusion to this paper is embodied in some lines from the poem "Children Learn What They Live" by Dorothy Law Nolte.

If a child lives with hostility,
he learns to fight.
If a child lives with ridicule,
he learns to be shy.

Based on a seminar given at the Spring Saturday Seminars, University of New South Wales, September, 1981.

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I gratefully acknowledge the work of Dr Philip Zimbardo, upon whose work some sections of this paper have been based. *F.E.O.*

POINTS FOR PARENTS WITH SHY CHILDREN

1. Be supportive and understanding - everyone can be shy at times in their lives, especially during adolescence.

2. Make every effort to communicate with the shy individual - but not to the extent where you are seen to be "hassling and hounding".

3. Compliment the shy teenager on his/her personal strengths and positive aspects.

4. Gently and tactfully correct irrational attitudes being expressed by the adolescent.

5. Be trusting - establish what you consider to be firm and fair rules for behaviour and then trust your adolescent to abide by the rules.

6. When reprimanding the adolescent for transgressions, avoid character destroying name calling like "Don't be so stupid". Specify the point you are trying to make - "I am disappointed in that you were home at 1.30 when we agreed upon 12.00".

7. Involve father as much as possible in family events. Research shows that adolescents who were high in self esteem came from families where the father was closely involved with each of the children in the family.

8. Help the adolescent clarify his/her career goals. Visit training programmes, tertiary education institutions and work through the adolescent's career ibilities together.

9. Invite others to your home and ask the shy adolescent to help with the entertaining - cooking, serving, socializing.

10. Look for opportunities where the adolescent can meet others who share common interests - tennis, music, etc.

11. Speak to the teachers at school and ask if there could be opportunities where the adolescent could obtain practice in active discussion and listening skills. Working on a student syndicate or a project committee and presenting the results to the class is a good starter.

12. Encourage good eye contact and smiling whenever possible.

13. Expect a certain amount of hero worship, but be cautious about your adolescent setting exceedingly high and unrealistic standards for his/her own achievement.

14. Take every opportunity to express your feelings with the adolescent - from "I love you" to "I am exceedingly angry with you when you do ... "

15. Encourage open discussion and debate at home and respect the views expressed by your children.

16. Don't be alarmed at what might appear to be outlandish clothing and hair styles. Adolescents generally strive for opportunitites to express their independence and individuality.

17. Encourage the teenager to invite his/her friends home.

18. Teenagers can be acutely sensitive to being embarrassed. Help them to learn how to constructively have a good laugh at themselves and then have another go at the task which caused them the embarrassment.

19. If your teenager is behaving in ways which you think exceed the limits of normality, seek the advice of a professional helper - your doctor or a specialist in adolescent behaviour.

SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING MANUAL FOR
A TREATMENT STUDY ON SOCIAL SHYNESS (1977)

Fred Orr,
Student Counselling
and Research Unit,
University of New
South Wales

Daphne Degotardi,
Counselling Service,
Sydney University

Jon Boughton
Counselling Service,
Sydney University

and

Barbara Crouch
Student Counselling
and Research Unit,
University of New South Wales

*Please Note:

This manual was composed by the authors by expanding the sessional notes for each meeting of the social skills treatment groups. The purpose of preparing the manual was to report in reasonable detail what was done. The authors do not mean to imply that the procedures described herein are necessarily the best or most effective way to conduct social skills training groups. The format and contents of the manual should suggest the necessity for group leaders to prepare session by session programs to meet as many of the idiosyncratic needs of the group members as possible.

*Reference is made to two books in this manual:

Johnson, D.W. Reaching Out: Interpersonal Effectiveness and Self-Actualization. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972.

Lange, A.J., & Jakubowski, P. Responsible Assertive Behavior. Illinois: Research Press, 1976.

SESSION I

Time: 2 hours

1. The group leaders present the handout giving the Rationale of the program (Appendices 5,6) and stress the effectiveness of social skills training in overcoming difficulties in opposite-sex social interactions. The group members are told that daily practice will be essential for positive change. The group sessions will present exercises for acquiring new skills, but without regular practice between group meetings, little improvement could realistically be expected.

2. EXERCISE: "Get to know each other" - An exercise designed to give participants an opportunity to learn something about one another.

   The group leader divides the group into pairs and gives the following instructions:

   "This is an exercise designed to give you the opportunity to learn something about each other. Select another person in the group whom you don't know. Each of you might ask your partner their name, age, area of work[1],(other personal details[2]),as well as personal aims for the social skills component of the program. We will give you about two minutes each to gather the information and then we will call everyone back together. Then we will introduce ourselves to the group, but we will be introduced by our partner with whom we spoke. Your partner will first tell the group their name, then the name of the person they spoke with, and finally a "thumb nail sketch" of their partner. The person so introduced will have the opportunity to confirm or correct any of the details given by their partner.

   The group then divides into pairs and the group leader gives indications about time to ensure both parties have ample time to learn about their partner. The group leader calls the group together for the person-to-group introduction (If the group leader has been a member of a dyad, it is often valuable for the leader to go first and provide a role model for the reporting back procedure).

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[1]With university student populations, usually their major study area.

[2]Other personal details may vary with the nature of the participant population.

Thus:

a) exercise explained
b) person 1 asks,person 2 responds
c) person 2 asks, person 1 responds
d) person 1 introduces person 2 to group; person 2 has right to correct or clarify information.
e) reverse of (d)

3. The group leader distributed the handout on "Guidelines for Feedback" (Appendix 7). The importance of feedback as being both a potent reinforcer and source of corrective information is stressed and the specific content of each of the guidelines is discussed. The importance of individual responsibility in the feedback process is emphasised.

4. EXERCISE: "Initial self-disclosure" - An exercise designed to reduce the anxiety associated with self-disclosure. A list of about 50 adjectives (Appendix 8) is distributed and the following instruction given:

"I want you to read the adjective checklist and then tick six adjectives which you feel are most descriptive of yourself. When everyone has completed the task we will go around the group and ask everyone to read out the adjectives they have selected. Everyone will have the opportunity to discuss the selections they have made."

The group leader allows sufficient time for the task to be completed. It is recommended that the group leader also complete an adjective checklist and even be the first to read out the selected adjectives. After reading out the adjectives, the group leader might wish to briefly describe why the six adjectives were selected, perhaps noting how many are seen to be positive attributes and how many are negative ones. The group leader's active participation continues to provide a role model for the group as well as enabling the group members to get to know the leader as a person.

5. EXERCISE: "Introduction to verbal and non-verbal demands of communication".

The group leader and a confederate (it is recommended that two persons always manage such skills training groups) carry out a role play of spontaneous meeting between two acquaintances (Role situation: a previous but brief meeting occurred between the individuals and Person 1 would like to continue the association). During the role play, inappropriate non-verbal behaviours are accentuated ad absurdum (humour never goes amiss if constructively managed by the leaders)- Lack of eye contact, inappropriate posture,gesture

and personal space. Following the role play, the group leader asks the following questions of the group members:

a) "Do you think what you have just seen was a successful or enjoyable interaction?"..... and assuming a "No" reply.....

b) "What non-verbal and/or verbal behaviours mitigated against it being a successful interaction? In this situation a writing board is an asset as the group leader can note the responses from the group. Having listed the suggestions, the group leader and confederate carry out a second role play, but this time using appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviours for the situation.

At the completion of the role play, and referring to the group's comments about the first role play recorded on the board, the group leader asks the following question:

c) "In what way was this role play different from the first?"

Allow time for discussion of the differences observed.

6. EXERCISE: "Role play an emotion non-verbally" The group leader role plays an emotion using non-verbal components only, and asks the group if they can identify the emotion being expressed.

Record the responses and ask which non-verbal elements defined the emotion. The group leader then asks each participant to think of an emotion and in turn, to role play it. The same procedure of identifying the emotion and the constituent non-verbal elements are reported. It is often valuable to videotape this exercise. Because of time constraints, it has been found advisable to videotape all participants in turn as they role play their chosen emotion and then conduct the feedback session afterwards. A stop-frame video facility will enhance the feedback session by allowing the precise non-verbal elements to be demonstrated.

7. HOMEWORK: The group leader sets the following homework for completion by next session:

a) "Read Chapters 1 and 2 from Reaching Out."

b) "Seek out a situation where you can observe peers interacting with each other. As you observe the interaction, try to define the various components - e.g. amount of eye contact, extent of facial expression, use of gestures, etc. Following a period of observation, find an appropriate person and attempt to engage them in conversation. Try and select a low anxiety setting where conversation is usually the norm - service oriented persons, such as librarians, information desk clerks, might be a reasonable starter. Record details of these interactions on the "Social Encounter Record Sheet". (Appendix 11).

c) "Spend at least five minutes each day closely observing verbal and non-verbal behaviours of opposite-sex peers involved in social encounters.

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SESSION 2

Time: 2 hours

1. HOMEWORK DISCUSSION:

a) The group leaders ask the participants what they learned from their reading assignment in Reaching Out. The participants are asked to comment about how the major points in the chapters relate to their own social behaviours and to their specific personal aims for the program.

b) Participants discuss their observations of social encounters between opposite-sex peers. Group leaders lead discussion on the reported material.

c) Participants tell the group about their social interactions as recorded on their Social Encounter Record Sheet. Specific reference should be made to their ratings of anxiety and social skill competency as well as any notes on how they think they were perceived by the other person.

2. DISCUSSION AND ROLE PLAY BY GROUP LEADERS: INITIATING CONVERSATIONS WITH NEW PEOPLE

Group leaders discuss ways of initiating conversations with new people. Reference is made to specific variables such as the setting, the social context (choosing the person and the time and place for the proposed conversation), as well as the verbal/non-verbal communication elements previously discussed. The group leaders demonstrate several ways of initiating a conversation using a role play.

3. DISCUSSION AND EXERCISE - OPEN VS. CLOSED QUESTIONS

Participants in social skills groups often complain that they find that in a social situation, especially on meeting new people that they "run out of things to say". This exercise is firstly designed to enhance the member's skills in using open questions (e.g., "What did you think about the concert?") versus closed (e.g., "Did you like the concert"). Secondly, the exercise aims to enhance participants' abilities to respond to open questions with "free" information in a way which will develop the acquaintanceship process. A role play by the group leader is performed to illustrate the difference between open and closed questions. By exaggerating the effect of closed questions in a social exchange, the group leaders can show how ineffective and uneconomical this style of communication can be when used exclusively or almost exclusively. In the closed question segment of the role play, it can be seen that the people concerned are forcing each other to work very hard for every scrap of information. On the other hand, open questions and the offering of free information allows for a more relaxed and enjoyable way of discovering areas of common interest.

Following the demonstrations of using closed and then open questions in a meeting with a new person, the participants are to find a partner and practice using open questions and open responses. After the practice sessions, the group leader asks the participants to comment upon their reactions to the exercise.

4. HOMEWORK: The group leader sets the following homework for completion by next session:

a) "Observe the non-verbal aspects in social encounters between opposite-sex pairs. Make estimates especially as to the amount of eye contact and smiling behaviour. Observe also the reactions of the other party to these behaviours."

b) "Using the Social Encounter Record Sheet to keep a record of your interactions, monitor your own frequency of smiling behaviour and eye contact in general personal interactions."

c) Re-read Chapters 1 and 2 of "Reaching Out" to reinforce the issues raised in the homework discussion at the commencement of this session.

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SESSION 3

Time: 2 hours

1. HOMEWORK DISCUSSION:

a) Participants report on their observations of opposite-sex pairs with special reference to their estimates of eye contact and smiling behaviour. While any significant reports should be dealt with immediately, general discussion of the impact of eye contact and smiling behaviour on the interaction observed should be left for general and possible comparative discussion following the next step.

b) Participants report on the monitoring of their own eye contact and smiling behaviour that they have recorded on their recording sheets.

The group leaders then lead a discussion considering the points raised by the participants.

c) Group leaders reintroduce the issues raised in Chapters 1 and 2 of "Reaching Out" and reinforce them in general group discussion.

2. EXERCISE:

a) Conversation maintenance exercise: this exercise is designed to:

1. simulate a group conversation
2. help participants experience the pace and subject change in conversations.
3. help participants contribute to ongoing conversations.

The exercise is introduced by the group leaders with reference to the objectives noted above. The exercise is conducted as follows:

- the participants pair up and sit down in two semicircular rows one behind the other so that each person sitting in the front row (the primary participant) has a paired partner sitting behind. The partners act as timers - to measure their partner's overall talking time during the conversation and as coaches - to offer suggestions or topics which their partner might introduce into the conversation if their partner is not accruing adequate conversation time.

A topic is selected for discussion and during the time allowed (time = N x 2mins. where N = number of primary participants) each primary participant tries to accumulate at least two minutes of conversation time.

The exercise is videotaped and on replay special note is made of the verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication. The group leaders should also point out the frequency and type of changes in conversational topics, that is pinpoint the conversational strategies employed by primary participants. A most important aim of the video replay session is to positively reinforce the conversation contributions of the primary participants. The group members should be encouraged to offer feedback to each other.

EXERCISE:

b) Conversation maintenance

The exercise described above is repeated but on this occasion the roles are reversed - the primary participants now adopt the timers/ prompters role and vice versa.

Videotaping and discussion follow as before.

3. DISCUSSION: Introduction to Assertive Behaviour

The group leaders introduce the concept of assertive behaviour, making particular reference to the distinction between assertion and aggression. The discussion covers the appropriateness of assertive behaviour and the differential social consequences of both assertion and aggression.

4. HOMEWORK:

a) Group participants read Chapters 3 and 4 of Reaching Out prior to next meeting.

b) Observe verbal behaviours - especially in small groups and dyads - and take special note of the following two components:

- self-disclosure statements made by speaker
- interest expressed in others by speaker

c) Monitor and record your own frequency of self-disclosure statements and frequency of interest expressed and positive feedback given to others.

****

SESSION 4

Time: 4 hours

1. HOMEWORK DISCUSSION:

a) The group leaders lead a discussion session on the contents of Chapters 3 and 4 of Reaching Out seeking participants' reactions to the material, especially as it relates to their personal aims in the group program.

b) Participants report on their observations of the specific verbal behaviours in opposite-sex dyads - i.e. self disclosure and interest expressed in others. Group leaders lead a discussion on the reported material.

c) Participants report on their recordings of self-monitored behaviours of self-disclosure and expressed interest/positive feedback to others. Discussion concentrates on the participant's perceived level of skill and the responses experienced in relation to these behaviours in the interactions recorded.

2. EXERCISE: THE "BOSS GAME" - An introductory exercise in assertive training. The group is required to stand in a circle and each participant has the responsibility to issue three orders which every group member must comply with - the group leaders may elect to go first to provide a role model for the behaviour.

3. EXERCISE: ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR - MAKING REQUESTS: - A brief review of the definition of assertive behaviour should preceed this exercise. The notion can be put that assertive behaviour rather than angry or submissive behaviour enriches life and in the long run leads to more satisfying personal relationships. On the other hand it is necessary to reinforce the individual's right to choose the way he/she wishes to behave even when this choice is not to assert himself/herself.

The participants might be asked whether in the past they have not made requests they would like to have made. The leaders attempt to elicit from the participants the sorts of attitudes which result in this sort of behaviour, e.g., "My needs aren't as important as others". "The other person may say 'no', and they will end up not liking me". A number of short role plays can involve each of the participants making a request and using video feedback as well as their partner's feedback to monitor their performance.

The role play is introduced on a hierarchical approach with tasks relevant for the target population. A sample hierarchy and several specific tasks for university/school populations follows:

- relatively low demand requests,

  e.g. Ask to borrow a pencil.
  Ask to borrow a classmate's notes in the library.
  Ask to borrow a classmate's notes overnight two weeks before the final examination period.

- higher demand requests: often involving the respondent in giving up some time or effort.

  e.g., Asking for a lift, knowing it will take the respondent out of their way.
  Ask to borrow a person's car for a weekend.

4. EXERCISE: ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR - REFUSING REQUESTS - A role play by the leaders can demonstrate some non-assertive ways requests can be refused. Often the responsibility for the refusal is deflected onto another party rather than directly confronting the issue. For example, "My parents won't let me lend my car to anyone", or "I'm not sure whether I'll be using the stereo on Friday night". A group exercise can involve dyads in which each person makes two "reasonable" requests of the other and in each case the answer is 'no'.

In processing the feedback available from videotape and from other participants, leaders reinforced positive changes in behaviour. For example, "Your eye contact was very good and your upright body posture gave a definite feeling of self-confidence."

5. HOMEWORK:

   a) Read Chapter 5 and 6 Reaching Out.

   b) Initiate a conversation of limited duration in a library or other service facility with an opposite-sex peer. Make notes on the Social Encounter Sheet about the strengths and weaknesses of each encounter.

   c) Maintain self-monitoring of own frequency of self-disclosure, smiling and eye contact in your daily interactions.

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SESSION 5

Time: 2 hours

1. HOMEWORK DISCUSSION

   The homework discussion should include a brief review of the main points of Chapters 5 and 6 in Reaching Out. Group leaders should seek comments from the participants concerning the verbal and non-verbal expression of feelings as covered in the text and as experienced in their day-to-day interactions.

   Participants report on their homework assignments of monitoring self-disclosures, smiling and eye contact in opposite-sex and other social interactions. It is important to reinforce both success as well as attempts which proved to be less than successful. Participants can be reminded that success will often be obtained only with the commitment to keep trying. That is, learn something new from each attempt whether or not it resulted in success.

2. EXERCISE: GIVING AND RECEIVING COMPLIMENTS - Giving compliments and expressing appreciation is an important skill which usually results in the compliment receiver feeling pleasure and potentially being prepared to deepen or further the relationship. The attitudes which hold back participants from giving compliments should be elicited. For example, participants might be asked about feelings of insincerity on giving compliments. Under what

circumstances are compliments inappropriate? When might it be undesirable to offer a compliment?

In discussing the task of receiving a compliment, it can be useful to draw a parallel with the guidelines developed for feedback (see Appendix 7), especially positive feedback. The point can be made that an acceptable compliment is like a gift, a gift which may be appreciated or rejected. If the compliment is not accepted gracefully it reflects a judgment which might invalidate the honesty of the giver. Other attitudes which can affect giving and receiving compliments should be elicited from the group. For example, "If I agree with the compliment, they will think I'm conceited. People giving compliments don't really mean it. When someone gives me a compliment, they are wanting something from me."

A short group exercise can involve each person giving a compliment to the next person in a circle and then receiving a response. It should be emphasised that this compliment should be sincere,but it does not need to be profound. It can be a simple thing that one person likes about another. Some time should be taken in working through this exercise, that is, obtaining the reactions of participants to both giving and receiving the compliment, how comfortable they felt, whether they would like to have behaved differently, etc. From this discussion, it should be possible to set up a role play to illustrate one or more situations in which participants have experienced difficulties with compliments in the past. The role plays can be used to illustrate a variety of ways in which compliment giving and receiving can be successfully handled. Feedback from the other group participants on the details of the role play can be used to illustrate the principles which are being highlighted, for example, how did the participants feel in receiving feedback and how would they rate their responses?

3. HOMEWORK:

   a) Read Chapters 7 and 8 Reaching Out.

   b) Make notes on Social Encounter Record Sheet on five encounters with peers. Attempt to introduce appropriate compliments in as many of these encounters as possible.

   c) Take the initiative to make an arrangement to meet an opposite-sex peer. Members of the group can use each other for this assignment if they wish. Record notes on the strengths and weaknesses of each encounter.

****

SESSION 6

Time: 2 hours

1. HOMEWORK DISCUSSION:

   a) In leading the discussion of Chapters 7 and 8, the leaders should review the salient features of the material on helpful styles of listening and responding and on the acceptance of self and others. Comment can be sought on the relevance of this material to participants' personal experiences.

   b) A 'go round' of reports on encounters by participants since the last meeting should involve reinforcements for attempts made as well as 'successes'. Participants who have tried something new, for example, establishing a conversation with a peer who is of particular interest, should be complimented for the initiative made, whether or not the interaction proved to be successful.

2. EXERCISE: VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOURS IN CONVERSATION, A REVIEW - The focus of this role play exercise is to practice initiating, maintaining and terminating social encounters. The role plays should provide the opportunity to review the verbal and non-verbal components already dealt with in earlier sessions. It is useful to elicit the co-operation of group members not involved in the role play to be individually responsible for feedback on particular features, e.g., eye contact, voice tone, open ended questions. The situations should approximate social encounters experienced in the daily lives of the participants. Before commencing the interaction, role playing participants can be asked to specify their personal aims for the encounter (e.g., practice compliment giving, being assertive, etc.) and any particular changes they would like to make in terms of their previous experience.

3. EXERCISE: ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR. INITIATING AND ACCEPTING A ONE-TO-ONE INVITATION - The area of 'dating behaviour' and the movement into intimate relationships is likely to be a sensitive one and the subject of a great deal of interest by participants. The work already covered in making and refusing requests has application here but the risks are seen usually as greater and the effect of rejection more painful. Anxiety about negative consequences to asking a person out should be discussed. Specific reference might be made to problems, such as taking no initiatives; giving a mixed message which may be interpreted as indifference in asking a person out; failing to be specific about arrangements etc.

The verbal and non-verbal expression of positive and negative feelings can be revised in this context as well as the importance of the congruence between the verbal and non-verbal message.

Some of the attitudes which lead to incongruence and ambivalence in these situations can be elicited from participants, e.g., wanting to 'save face' in case of rejection, believing that the other person 'knows' how you feel.

The role plays developed in this exercise should start with low threat and casual arrangements. Both females and males should be invited to take the initiative in asking their role partner out. The differences in behaviours and attitudes can then be discussed. The acceptability of a wide range and variety of behaviours should be illustrated, as it is in this area in particular that myths about the 'one correct way of behaving' abound.

4. HOMEWORK:

a) Read Chapter 9 in Reaching Out

b) Make notes on two daily encounters with opposite-sex peers.

c) Make arrangements to meet two opposite-sex peers for a casual meeting.

d) Make notes on encounters you observe between opposite-sex peers, including eye contact, smiling behaviour, and signs of interest and enthusiasm.

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SESSION 7

Time: 2 hours

1. HOMEWORK DISCUSSION:

The final 'go round' in which participants report on their homework assignments can be structured in a way that first allows each person to reflect on the changes they have made during the program and formulate some personal aims in terms of "where do I go from here?" This may be prefaced by a review of the set chapter in the text on constructive confrontation. Participants can be invited to write a short statement in which they constructively confront themselves in terms of their present behaviours and how these need to be changed to

reach their desired goals. These statements may then be shared around the group with the leaders assisting by helping the participants to change destructive to constructive confrontations and helping each person to develop a specific and realistic aim for his/her on-going development.

2. EXERCISE: ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR - REJECTING ONE-TO-ONE INVITATIONS - This exercise,like the 'refusing request' segment,requires skill in saying 'no'. The fear of being disliked, and the fear of arousing the expression of anger or other negative feelings in the other person are two of the attitudes which lead people to say 'yes' when they want to say 'no'. Other beliefs and attitudes can be elicited by the leaders from group participants with specific examples.

   Leaders might role model two types of interactions: one which shows ambivalence, prevarication and/or failure to accept responsibility for rejecting the invitation, e.g., "I think I've arranged to go out with a friend this Friday". "I'm afraid I have to work." And a second type of rejection which involves the willingness of the person to responsibly reject the invitation in terms of "I don't want to" or "I won't" rather than "I can't".

   The role plays developed to increase participants' skills in the task should be structured so that the rejection responses are interspersed with acceptances. By so doing, the inviter is more likely to have a more realistic experience in handling the rejection and both participants have an opportunity to get appropriate feedback.

3. DISCUSSION: SUMMING UP

   The final session of the program can include a general positive feedback experience where each person in turn receives the positive comments of all the other participants in terms of the positive behaviours and positive changes they have seen.

Additionally, experience has shown that 'booster sessions' held perhaps three and six months following program termination can promote transfer of training from the group experience per se to the day-to-day social lives of the group participants. Group members might also want to exchange addresses and telephone numbers to allow for continuing contact.